



## Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique

French Journal of British Studies

XXI-1 | 2016

Citizenship in the United Kingdom

---

Review of Gilbert Bonifas & Martine Monacelli (eds.), *Southern Horrors: Northern Visions of the Mediterranean World*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, xxv-215 p.

Stéphanie Prévost

---



### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/827>

DOI: 10.4000/rfcb.827

ISSN: 2429-4373

### Publisher

CRECIB - Centre de recherche et d'études en civilisation britannique

### Electronic reference

Stéphanie Prévost, « Review of Gilbert Bonifas & Martine Monacelli (eds.), *Southern Horrors: Northern Visions of the Mediterranean World*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, xxv-215 p. », *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* [Online], XXI-1 | 2016, Online since 20 July 2016, connection on 04 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rfcb/827> ; DOI : 10.4000/rfcb.827

---

This text was automatically generated on 4 May 2019.



Revue française de civilisation britannique est mis à disposition selon les termes de la licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

---

Review of Gilbert Bonifas & Martine Monacelli (eds.), *Southern Horrors: Northern Visions of the Mediterranean World*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, xxv-215 p.

Stéphanie Prévost

---

## REFERENCES

Gilbert BONIFAS et Martine MONACELLI (eds.), *Southern Horrors: Northern Visions of the Mediterranean World*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, xxv-215 p.

- 1 “Nothing is more difficult than for a foreigner to give a correct account of the state of a country – its laws, its manners, its customs; – the first often so different in their operation from what outwardly appears; the latter, never fully understood, Proteus-like, assume a thousand contradictory appearances and elude investigation.” Quite unexpectedly, Mary Shelley’s remark in a February 1843 letter on Tuscany perfectly applies to the collection of essays presented by Gilbert Bonifas, Emeritus Professor of English History and Civilization, and Martine Monacelli, Professor of British Studies at Nice-Sophia Antipolis University, in *Southern Horrors: Northern Visions of the Mediterranean World*. Whereas Shelley insists on how difficult it is to ascertain what there is to see because of deep-rooted preconceptions that may have been nurtured by personal, but also cultural and societal mindsets, *Southern Horrors* sets a slightly different tone, it seems: due to its foundational nature, the Mediterranean South has been mostly – not to say exclusively – envisaged by Northerners as “travels through darkness”

[1]. But is it so simple? In reality, the title of Roderick Cavaliero's prologue [1] invites us to read beyond this Manichean axiomatic/ geographical division of the North as good and the South as evil. In a similar way, although the book is indeed about looking into the "less enticing aspects and repugnance" (back matter) that an extended Mediterranean South induced in Northern (Protestant) Europeans from the late sixteenth century to the 1930s, the reader is subtly brought to understand that "the cornucopia of Southern horrors" [6] is but very often only one side of the coin. The critical introduction by Gilbert Bonifas and Martine Monacelli, as well as the perspicacious prologue by Roderick Cavaliero make this very clear. So do the subsequent fifteen chapters, which give analyses of direct or indirect encounters with the Mediterranean World from the standpoint of Northerners, mostly British and German ones, but some of them also American.

- 2 Southern Horrors is part of a tradition seeking to deconstruct Northern accounts of what remains "one-way exchanges", most brilliantly embodied by John Pemble's 1987 landmark study *The Mediterranean Passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the South*. If both works have similarities, especially in eventually bringing home that Northerners often experienced a mix of attraction and repulsion vis-à-vis the South – although Pemble's take on the Mediterranean South was more positive at the onset –, differences are nevertheless many ... and not just a matter of timeframes or standpoints. Indeed, whereas Pemble strove to show "how a revolution in transportation enabled the British middle classes to follow the aristocracy to the South in pursuit of culture, health, pleasure, and spiritual inspiration", the *raison d'être* of *Southern Horrors* is "to decipher the ethos and to unravel the nexus of *mentalités* that determined the Northern perception (or imagination) of a dark Mediterranean world and inspired its representation" [xiii]. The originality of *Southern Horrors* thus lies in the fact that it offers case studies in which authors try to pin down what the South meant for a specific – but varied – array of Northerners, who developed a special relationship with the Mediterranean South: not necessarily because they experienced it and responded to it as travellers or churchmen in the field (see Chapters 6, 7, 9, 12 and 13 respectively about Grand Tourists responding to the Roman Campagna, Germans in eighteenth-century Lisbon, British visitors and winter residents in Nice, Marmaduke Pickthall in the Ottoman Empire, and American missionaries in the Levant), but also because this reconstructed geographical space was a source of inspiration for writers and artists (see especially Chapters 1, 14-15 on Gothic fiction, Chapter 3 on Elizabethan drama, Chapter 5 on Surrealists, and Chapter 8 on Dickens's *Pictures from Italy*). The great variety of these case studies, which are revised versions of papers presented at an international symposium held in Nice in April 2012, helps to show how complex Northern perceptions of the Mediterranean South are – complex to the point that they make generalizations uneasy, as had already been intimated in liminal remarks to *L'Angleterre et le monde méditerranéen* (1987). Approaches used here, which mostly combine methodologies from the humanities (literature in a broad sense, history and the visual arts) with some employed in the social sciences (analyses of judicial cases and urban history in particular), also definitely contribute to this better extending of the Mediterranean South, which takes readers from Portugal to the Balkans, through Egypt, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon.
- 3 If the timelessness of "Southern horrors" permeates throughout these accounts, what comes out is that no matter the type of contact with the Mediterranean South (direct or indirect), it mostly remained an intellectual journey for which preconceptions often precluded an objective encounter, also with its inhabitants – or at least made it difficult,

as Mary Shelley suggested in 1843. This is true also of pieces dealing with travel experiences, which tend to highlight the tensions between the world that these Northerners discovered and the world they had imagined. For instance, in her chapter about Grand Tourists' reactions to the Roman Campagna (Chapter 6), Lisa Beaven accounts for their dismay by insisting that "their mental image of an ideal Claudian landscape, with antique associations, clashed with the reality of a seemingly barren and treeless landscape" [91]. In most of the accounts of Northern (Protestant) Europeans, what is identified as decadence from idealized Ancient and Classical worlds – which, as Cavaliero rightly, remarks, could still be replete with violence as well [1-4] – not only leads to disappointment, but mostly results in outright denunciation and condemnation of such «horrors». Amongst these, Roman Catholicism, Islam, violence, lewdness, debauchery and despotism ranked prominent, with religion often being mentioned in these post-Reformation discourses as the cause of the fall of past, glorious civilizations. In Chapters 5 and 11, Paul Barlow and Francesca Vanke powerfully argue that such «degradation» [65] was also perceived as being due to innate racial inferiority, to the point that beautiful ceramics or rugs were misattributed and called "Persian" – even if they were Turkish. Vanke reminds her readers that Robert Knox had declared "Oriental races" incapable of progress because of "race" in his 1850 publication *The Races of Men*, and echoes Barlow's presentation of the classification of races. As far as the Southern Mediterranean (and actually East) were concerned, both Barlow and Vanke emphasize the importance of the "Turanian" category, which is being rediscovered in studies of Northern perceptions of the South. Vanke's wonderings about why James Fergusson considered the Turks of "the Turanian race", often described as «the most primitive» one, attest to how fluctuating such categorizations could actually be and how problematic (the legacy of) Orientalist racializing is [146]. As Vanke deftly shows, the association between Turks and Turanians gathered momentum in the context of «the Bulgarian atrocities» of 1876, which provides an analytical framework to Chapter 10, dedicated to young journalist William T. Stead's passionate campaign against Islam and the Turks at the time and to Gladstone's response. The late Jean-Claude Sergeant concurs with historians of the 1876 Eastern Question, especially Richard T. Shannon and Ann P. Saab, that Stead «probably exaggerated his part in influencing Gladstone's progressive acceptance of his role as national mouthpiece of the opposition to Disraeli's Eastern European policy» [140]. Sergeant does not investigate other factors that may have drawn the «Great Old Man» out of political retirement, and interested readers will have to look elsewhere for a more detailed analysis, especially in the publication that followed the William T. Stead Centenary conference held at the British Library in 2012. But this chapter serves a broader purpose in demonstrating how some «Southern horrors» could rouse a widespread feeling of national duty to stamp them out and impose Christian moralism instead onto people presented as morally, intellectually, if not racially inferior.

- 4 In their critical introduction, Bonifas and Monacelli forewarn readers that «Orientalism, in fact, is not absent from this book» [xxi] and that «geographically we seem to be passing from a North/South to a West/East divide» [xxi], which is also accountable in terms of shifting historical boundaries with the Balkans only becoming completely independent from Ottoman/ Turkish rule in 1912. If Stead's and Gladstone's participation in the Bulgarian agitation movement is mostly about how the Concert of Europe should hasten reform in the Ottoman Empire to protect Ottoman Christians and Europeanize it, Chapters 4 and 15 clearly exemplify Said's point in *Orientalism* (1978) that the denunciation of «Southern horrors» could also stem from a fear of contamination within

Europe [xxi]. In Chapter 15, Susan Oliver examines the critical reception of Keats's *Lamia* (1820) and Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) in Britain and finds that disapproval had to do with concerns over the immorality of both stories, but also invasion [210] in much the same way as Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) would be perceived a few decades later. By contrast, after a careful examination of trial proceedings involving Mediterranean-born offenders in between 1830-1900, Neil Davie identifies a shift in how such offenders were considered and concludes on a dwindling «fear of a wave of foreign-inspired knife crime» [62] after 1865, when “concerns about endemic lawlessness about the English ‘residuum’” more or less supplanted it [63]. Despite the permanence of “Southern horrors” chapter after chapter, readers are made to feel that their perception is also linked to specific historical and political contexts and is also an issue of personal interpretation. Marmaduke Picktall's *Turcophile* writings presented by Alice Salvatore in Chapter 12 are an intriguing case in point of complex counter-Orientalism as later Picktall blames the West for creating “Southern horrors” [169], while still posing a Western gaze on Eastern realities, especially in his fiction.

- 5 In a nutshell, *Southern Horrors* presents a convincing argument throughout that unfolds from the critical edition and the prologue to the subsequent fifteen chapters, which are most often extremely well-referenced, engage with current historiographical debates, and have cross-references. This book will appeal to all those who are interested in Northern representations of the Mediterranean South ... or the East.

---

## AUTHORS

STÉPHANIE PRÉVOST

Université Paris-Diderot